



Anthem Chamber of Commerce

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Anthem, Arizona

Thursday, August 13, 2009

Thank you very much, Doug (Clark).

It is a pleasure to be with all of you this morning, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about these VERY interesting times in Arizona.

I say "INTERESTING" because, back in January, when I first took office, I knew we Arizonans had a rough economic road ahead. However, I have been through tough economic times before.

When I was first elected to higher office in 1982, our state's economy was dealing with a substantial recession.

When I was first elected to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, the County was on the verge of bankruptcy.

I worked hard to correct the problem and I urged my colleagues on the Board to return to fiscal sanity.

We DID recover, and Maricopa County was ultimately recognized as the best run in the country.

As Governor, one of the FIRST things I did was to put forward a 5-point plan.

You MUST know what is in the plan by now, but, just in case you don't – the plan included:

Structural budget reform

Improving Proposition 105

Spending cuts

Targeted Tax cuts, and as a last resort

A temporary tax increase

I made this decision after consulting with some of the best economic minds in the country. My 5-point plan, is a true strategy that if properly implemented can turn Arizona's economy around.

So, after months of negotiations – which included a Supreme Court hearing – my line-item vetoes – and a Special Session – we came to a tentative resolution. That resolution included what for ME was the key missing element – substantial additional revenue directed to education, public safety and health care for the most frail among us.

Now, some critics said -- it was not enough.

Other critics said -- it was too much.

But, I say, the critics are wrong.

I deeply believe that voters will join ME to protect public education and public safety and vital health services.

I have always trusted the people of Arizona.

But, I am deeply disappointed that some Members of the Arizona State Senate do not. They have so little trust in the voters, that they have once again delayed passage of a sound state budget, and they have denied the people an opportunity to protect critical funding for education, public safety, and care for our most vulnerable citizens.

There is no other way to say this. Their actions are irresponsible.

They are causing greater costs to state taxpayers and, if this crisis is not resolved quickly, they will do irreparable harm to our families and our economic future.

I am grateful for the courage, vision, and leadership of the Republican Members of the Arizona House and Arizona Senate.

I thank them for their support of a compromise budget package that could meet with my approval, address our historic shortfall, and provide a platform for a successful economic future.

As I have stated on numerous occasions since I took office last January, the state budget is neither a Republican, nor a Democratic problem, it is a problem for all of Arizona and should be addressed promptly and responsibly.

Members of the House and Senate who have supported a pragmatic, reasonable resolution of the budget shortfall have my lasting appreciation, and should be commended by the citizens of the State of Arizona.

I continue to work with legislators from both sides of the aisle to construct a budget package that will honestly and objectively address our state's massive budget deficit.

Now, with all of the difficulties that face us, the fact is -- we have ALREADY achieved a great deal -- and you in Anthem have much to be proud of.

Whether it's Boulder Creek High School, or the Outlet stores, or the Anthem Chamber itself, you have made Anthem a place worth moving to, a place worth living in.

I know there is a major development in education coming here in the fall of 2010 -- Great Hearts Academies will be opening its prep school campus.

Those academies are some of the top performing schools in the nation and in demand all over the Valley.

The students there receive an education that many families pay 50 or 60 thousand dollars for -- but they receive it from a public charter school.

So, a Great Hearts Academy in Anthem will be a great additional choice in education for your students and families. It's a great testament to the community that you are all focused on education and seeking the best, from all of your schools, for your children.

There are other points of pride.

The fact is, that -- together -- we have already made state government smaller.

-- We passed legislation allowing parents of disabled and foster children to continue to choose and utilize the school that best serves the needs of their children. And we accomplished this in a budget neutral way.

-- I continue to be a strong advocate for regulatory reform, and deeply believe that this is hardly the time for new and burdensome regulations that only serve to strangle businesses and add needless costs and frustrations to people who are simply trying to make an honest living.

-- In fact, on my second day in office, I issued a directive freezing all new agency regulations and rulemaking. That edict is still in place to this day.

So, we still have a long way to go to get our financial house in order. It will take time. It will not be easy. But, it was Dwight Eisenhower who once said, "History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid."

The truth is, those of us who are entrusted to govern here in Arizona -- at this moment in time -- CANNOT be weak or timid.

We must be strong and we must resolve that our differences will be settled with the triumph going to the best interests of Arizona, rather than the best interests of political egos or political futures.

Before I close, I want to address some of Anthem's transportation issues. Our population growth is projected to double by 2025 -- more people -- going more places -- more ways -- and more often.

Growth creates more needs, greater demands, tighter schedules, and new pressures on lifestyles.

I don't have to tell YOU that Interstate 17 is a vital roadway to Arizonans and the spine of our state highway system.

In addition to serving as a major interstate route to move people and goods between the Valley and other parts of the country, I-17 is also the primary route to Northern Arizona, and the ONLY highway serving several growing communities north of the Valley.

I am keenly aware of the importance of I-17 to Arizona residents, commerce, and tourism, and will do everything possible to expand and improve I-17 according to the Regional Transportation Plan, while minimizing construction impacts to drivers.

Construction is ongoing to widen Interstate 17 north of Loop 101 and to build new and improved interchanges to improve access to I-17 as part of a comprehensive Valley-wide Regional Transportation Plan.

The first phase of improvements will occur from Loop 101 to SR 74 or the Carefree Highway.

Construction of these improvements began in May 2007 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

The second phase of improvements includes a new general purpose lane from Carefree Highway to Anthem Way. This project is scheduled to begin this fall and be completed by early 2011.

The schedule for this project was accelerated in late 2006 by 14 years with state funding allocated by the state Legislature from the Statewide Transportation Acceleration Needs account.

State funding has since been replaced by the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

And these funds have also been dedicated to rehabilitate the pavement between Anthem Way and the Maricopa County line near Rock Springs.

Finally, third-phase improvements are funded in the current Regional Transportation Plan between 2021 and 2025 -- and include a general purpose lane from Carefree Highway to New River Road as well as an HOV lane to Anthem Way.

What does all of this mean?

It means a better way of life in and around Anthem – and it also means that the next time you invite me here – which, I hope will be soon – I can get here a lot quicker.

Thank you again to the Anthem Chamber for the kind invitation to speak to you today, and I look forward to being with you again soon.

Good morning to you all.